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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY
Directorate of Intelligence
15 June 1967

INTELLIGENCE MEMORANDUM

Current Soviet Role in the Middle East Crisis

Summary

Moscow appears to be escalating its diplomatic and verbal support for the Arabs now that the cease-fire seems to be holding. As part of an increasingly intensive effort to refurbish its own image and to win the diplomatic "war" in the aftermath of the Arab military defeat, Soviet propaganda attacks on Tel Aviv and its "imperialist backers" are becoming virulent. The USSR has threatened to take sanctions against Israel, and diplomatic moves in the UN are under way.

It appears to prestage a strong Soviet effort to win approval of a resolution condemning Israel as an aggressor and perhaps a bid for UN sanctions against Tel Aviv. The Soviets remained determined throughout the Middle East conflict to avoid a confrontation with the West and to bring about a cease-fire.

Note: This memorandum was produced solely by CIA. It was prepared jointly by the Office of Current Intelligence and the Office of Research and Reports, and was discussed with analysts of the Office of National Estimates.

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There still is no evidence that Russian military dispositions have changed, although modest deliveries of Soviet arms to Middle Eastern clients may continue, partly for public relations effect and partly to restore at least a minimal air-defense capability to Egypt.

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The Soviet Position in the Middle East

1. The Soviet threat to take sanctions against Israel has the twofold purpose of keeping pressure on the Israeli Government for the maintenance of the cease-fire and appeasing Arab demands for more resolute action by "Eastern bloc states." Moscow remains determined to maintain the cease-fire which they were instrumental in achieving even at the risk of Arab dissatisfaction.

Now
Soviet diplomatic moves against Israel reflect the concern of the Soviets over the weakness of their position--and that of the Arabs--in the Middle East.

2. Fedorenko's statements in the US and the reports in Soviet propaganda media continue to follow the Arab line and to charge Israel with aggression. Also, Moscow, linking the US with the Israeli position, has condemned US policy as defending aggression and ignoring the rights of the victims of that aggression. The hasty convocation of the Communist "summit meeting" and the USSR's subsequent breaking of relations with Israel are further indications of Moscow's efforts to regain favor with the Arabs. These measures are still little more than gestures, although they presage an intensified bid to refurbish the Soviet image with the Arabs.

3. Moscow's aim throughout the Middle East conflict has been to avoid a military confrontation with the West.

Any further
Soviet military assistance to the Arabs will be carefully designed to minimize the risks of confrontation with the West.

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INTELLIGENCE MEMORANDUM

Arab-Israeli Situation Report
(As of 8:00 a.m. EDT)

1. The latest reading from the USUN mission is that very few states will oppose the Soviet call for an emergency special session of the General Assembly, although a good number may say they are "not opposed" rather than in favor. It is also generally believed that the session will be convened by Monday at the latest.

2. The Soviet move seems to have upset some of the Arab delegations. [redacted] the Arabs see it as a gesture intended to restore confidence in Moscow rather than a true effort to help them.

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3. Jerusalem radio today quotes the commander of Israel's northern military area, General Elazar, as saying that his forces annihilated two Syrian brigades, hit three others, destroyed one-third of all Syrian tanks, and captured a large quantity of equipment. He also claimed that the Syrian officers were the first to desert the battlefield, and consequently, the number of officers among the Syrian POW's was small. Another Israeli general yesterday announced that his country holds 5,500 prisoners of war, 4,500 of whom are Egyptians.

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4. Jordan is continuing to receive aid and comfort from fellow Arabs. In addition to a Saudi Arabian fund raising campaign for Jordan, [REDACTED]

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Amman radio also announced yesterday that Nasir is donating one million dollars in hard currency to speed Jordan's recovery. If the last report is true, it would be a considerable sacrifice on Nasir's part, in view of the critical economic situation in Egypt.

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5. The Algerian radio announced yesterday that the government had forbidden access to Algerian ports for two American ships loaded with foodstuffs which were to dock soon.

6. Syrian President Atassi arrived in Algeria this morning, presumably to talk with Boumediene about his recent trip to Moscow, as well as to discuss strategy for the upcoming Arab summit conference.

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8. A Yugoslav radio broadcast claimed this morning that the Soviet transports flying to the UAR had already delivered about a hundred MIG fighters and that cargo ships carrying Soviet tanks have entered Alexandria.

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INTELLIGENCE MEMORANDUM

Arab-Israeli Situation Report
(As of 4:30 p.m. EDT)

1. Libya has asked the US to begin closing Wheelus Air Base. The Libyan government has publicly stated that Wheelus was not used against the Arabs during the war, but such charges together with Libya's desire to demonstrate unity with other Arab countries probably precipitated the request for US withdrawal. The British have also been asked to close their installations in Libya.

4. In Jordan the replacement of Wasfi al-Tal by Sharif Husayn ibn Nasir as Chief of the Royal Diwan, and the substitution of Salah abu Zayd for Sharif Abd al-Hamid Sharaf as Minister of Information are probably

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[REDACTED]

intended to please Egyptian President Nasir, since Tal and Sharaf have recently been his most outspoken critics in Jordan. The new Minister of Information, who is the King's principal speech writer, is also known for his anti-Nasirist leanings, but he has not been in the limelight recently. Bahjat al-Talhuni, who was appointed personal representative of the King and will probably attend many inter-Arab meetings, would be more acceptable to Nasir than some other Jordanian leaders.

[REDACTED]

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25X1 7. Confessional antagonisms in Lebanon may flare up in the near future. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] A minor clash between
25X1 Christian and Muslim youths contributed to the decision of the government to impose a curfew on 10 June. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

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9. So far about 24 members have responded affirmatively to the Secretary General's telegram on convening an emergency session of the General Assembly. Although the telegram specifically refers to the "Uniting for Peace" resolution, a Soviet member of the mission has reiterated to Ambassador Goldberg that the USSR is not acting under the resolution since it would not request the UN to use troops for peacekeeping. He added that Moscow always favored an Assembly general discussion.

10. The US Mission anticipates that very few states will oppose the assembly session, despite a general lack of enthusiasm. The Africans believe that an Assembly debate will not help and will be largely propagandistic. They would prefer not to have to take a stand on the issue. Some of the Nordic countries and the UK are willing to go along with a session if the majority wants it, but reserve the right to question whether the Council has exhausted all possibilities for action. This is presumably intended to preserve the possibility of challenging the legality of Assembly action on procedural grounds.

11. The Soviet request for an assembly session reflects an "interesting development of UN practices" in the opinion of the UN legal advisor Stavropoulos. He feels that the "Uniting for Peace" resolution should be

interpreted to permit members to take up an issue on which the Council is stymied, whether or not Council action has been vetoed. He believes the veto is implied now by failure of the Council to approve the Soviet resolution and by the Soviet announcement that it would veto the US resolution.

12. According to press reports the Soviet Foreign Ministry has told several ambassadors that Premier Kosygin will attend the General Assembly and expressed the hope that the meeting would turn into a summit conference.

13. The US has voted against the assembly session.

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